New Nouveau Brunswick CANADA

News Release

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N.B. Human Rights Commission

Release of Human Rights Commission 2002-03 annual report (03/09/19)

NB 811

Sept. 19, 2003

FREDERICTON (CNB) - The New Brunswick Human Rights Commission released its 2002-03 annual report on Friday, Sept. 12.

"Some of the achievements of which I am particularly proud are the declaration of New Brunswick Human Rights Day, on Sept. 15 of each year, the conferring of the Pioneer of Human Rights Award last fall and the launching of public consultations concerning our strategic direction," Commission Chair Patrick Malcolmson said.

Last fall, to mark the commission's 35th anniversary, Premier Bernard Lord declared Sept. 15 to be New Brunswick Human Rights Day. That date is the anniversary of the coming into force of the New Brunswick Human Rights Act.

On that day, the commission also presented its one-time Pioneer of Human Rights Award to three prominent New Brunswickers: former Premier Louis J. Robichaud, Gordon Fairweather, the first Chief Commissioner of the Canadian Human Rights Commission, and Sen. Noel Kinsella, the first Chair of the New Brunswick Human Rights Commission.

In addition, the Commission bestowed its 2002 Human Rights Award to the Multicultural Association of Fredericton on Dec. 10.

In October 2002, at a conference in Fredericton, the commission released a discussion paper about its programs, services and legislation. The paper was widely circulated, and public consultation meetings were held in six locations in New Brunswick. The commission plans to publish a summary of the comments made this fall.

The commission also consulted the public about draft guidelines that it had issued concerning discrimination in housing and drug and alcohol testing. Another achievement was the distribution of the commission's Learning Together teachers guide to 650 social studies teachers.

In 2002-03, the commission worked on 245 complaints of discrimination or harassment. Nearly half of them concerned mental or physical disability. About three-quarters of the complaints were employment-related.

Many of the complaints alleged a failure to accommodate. Employers, landlords and public service providers must go beyond uniform treatment in order to accommodate disabilities and other personal characteristics listed in the Human Rights Act, provided they can do so without incurring undue hardship or sacrificing their legitimate objectives.

"The Human Rights Commission's priority continues to be to ensure that discrimination complaints filed under the Human Rights Act are looked into and resolved as fairly and quickly as possible," Malcolmson said. "The commission also aims to ensure that New Brunswickers are well informed about their rights and responsibilities under the act, and about the limits to these rights."

"Looking back over the year, I am reminded that human rights are constantly evolving," Malcolmson said. "An example of this is the impact of Sept. 11. Terrorism requires the balancing of the rights to security and to life on one hand with the rights of privacy and equal treatment on the other. Other new challenges to our privacy and human rights are also being raised by genetic testing and by information technology, for example.

"The commission must respond to these challenges as well as to other new developments in technology, society and law. Historically, New Brunswick has been a leader in human rights, and I hope that we can continue and build upon that tradition."

The New Brunswick Human Rights Commission administers the provincial Human Rights Act, which prohibits discrimination and harassment based on religion, age, marital status, sex, sexual orientation, mental and physical disability, race, colour, national origin, place of origin and ancestry. The act applies to all employers, public services and housing, except those that fall under federal jurisdiction.

More information about the Human Rights Commission and the Human Rights Act is available online at: http://www.gnb.ca/hrc-cdp/e/index.htm.

03/09/19

EDITORS NOTE: Printed copies of the 2002-03 annual report can be obtained by calling 506-453-2301. The chart on page 53 is incorrect; an insert with the correct chart is available. Electronic copies will be available later this month at: http://www.gnb.ca/hrc-cdp/e/docs.htm. MEDIA CONTACT: Dr. Patrick Malcolmson, Chairman, New Brunswick Human Rights Commission, 506-453-2301.

03/09/19

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